

Partnership Guidance for Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Program Grants to Institutions of Higher Education

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) is offering the following guidance to help you determine if an existing or proposed partnership complies with the law and would be eligible to submit an application for an Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) grant. [NOTE: Additional information is also provided in the CPEC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section under “Improving Teacher Quality” and in FAQs for previous Requests for Proposals.]

The essence of an Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) project is that it is developed and implemented by a partnership formed in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act and U.S. Department of Education guidance. Grant applications that do not include the required partners will be disqualified from further consideration.

There are two key issues regarding partnerships—the identity of the higher education partners, and the eligibility of the school district partner.

Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) partners:

- MUST include a School or Department of Education in a four-year baccalaureate college or university AND a School or Department of Arts and Sciences (or comparable) from a four-year baccalaureate college or university. Both public and private institutions of higher education are eligible to apply.
- Each of these partners must play a definable role in delivering the proposed project. The projects must provide *both* subject matter content and pedagogy, hence the requirement for two university partners.
- Other types of institutions, including community colleges and community-based educational organizations, may participate as *additional* partners, but *cannot take the place* of the mandated IHE partner.
- It is understood that organizational patterns vary on campuses, so the name of your schools may not be the same as above, but they must be essentially the same.
- It is not required that both IHE partners come from the same institution—they may come from two different institutions.

School District/Local Education Agency (LEA) partners:

- Only school districts are eligible to be the “mandated” LEA partner in a grant. County offices of education may participate *in addition to* an LEA, but cannot take the place of a required LEA.
- At least one school district in the partnership must qualify under federal law as “high-need.” *The definition of “high-need” for the ITQ program is different from definitions used in many other federal education programs.* Some districts that are “high-need” in reality may not be able to meet the tests to qualify for ITQ grants. There are two key tests to determine if a specific school district is eligible as “high-need” or not:

- **The first test is based on children living in poverty as measured by U.S. Census statistics for the school district.** This is a population-based test for the entire school district, not a socioeconomic test for specific schools or even for all students enrolled in the district.
- Either 10,000 students OR 20% of the children aged 5-17 who live within the district boundaries MUST come from families who living in poverty. While most large urban school districts will likely meet the test, many medium-sized and smaller districts do not, even though their school enrollment may have a very high percentage of poor students (such as those eligible for free and reduced lunches).
- CPEC provides and updates a listing of California school districts that clearly identifies those meeting the population test. It is available at <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FederalPrograms/SchoolDistricts2009.xls>. If a school district is not designated as population-eligible in that list, it cannot meet the test of being a “high-need” district under the law.
- **The second test is based on teacher qualifications.** The district must have a “high percentage” of teachers who are not teaching in the academic subjects or grade levels that the teachers were trained to teach, OR there is a high percentage of teachers with emergency, provisional, or temporary certification or licensing.
- This test is hard to quantify, as most districts have moved closer to ALL teachers being “highly qualified” under NCLB, which may be seen as a proxy for the qualification level required. CPEC tries to be flexible in determining what percentage is “high percentage”, depending on the most recent statewide figures from the California Department of Education. All applications must include specific teacher data for the school district designated as high need in an application; such data may come from the district itself or the California Department of Education (CDE)*. Each year, CPEC will indicate what percentage automatically qualifies and the degree of flexibility that will be allowed below that percentage.
- Please note: these requirements, while not typical of all federally-funded education grants, must be met in ITQ grants. So long as they remain the rules, CPEC will operate by them. **Potential applicants are encouraged to determine whether their proposed “mandated” partners are truly eligible BEFORE they start to develop a proposal.**
- Any proposal may include MORE than the three mandated partners described above, such as additional districts, IHEs, or community partners. But applicants must demonstrate initially that the three proposed mandated partners actually meet federal requirements.

Please carefully read all relevant ITQ information and keep it in mind in seeking partners for ITQ grants. For further information, contact the ITQ staff by e-mail at Teacher_Quality@cpec.ca.gov.

*To reach specific district data on the CDE website, go to <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. Once there, select “District” in the “Level” drop-down box, and “Staffing” in the “Subject” drop-down box. Click “Submit” to go to the next page. Select the most recent year available and type in the district name and click “Submit” again. On the next screen, select the right district in the drop-down box, and select “Teacher Credential and Experience Report” on the list below. This will bring up a table with credential and experience information for the district. Applicants should also ask the district for figures on teachers who are teaching outside the grade or subject area for which they were certified, and for the percent of teachers who meet federal Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) standards.